

## Rod & Reel Pier remains closed, work continues

By Rick Catlin, Islander Reporter  
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Rod & Reel Pier fans might be singing “Blue Christmas.” But sometimes Santa just can’t deliver on time.

The 1947-built pier at 875 N. Shore Drive, Anna Maria, didn’t reopen as hoped in time for Christmas, but manager Dave Cochran said repairs to the facility are moving ahead “as fast as possible.”

The pier and restaurant have been closed since a Sept. 30 electrical fire.

Repairs — amounting to a rebuild — are ongoing but renovations must meet current Florida Building Code, said Anna Maria building official Bob Welch, and that requires more work.

Cochran said he’s not giving anyone an exact date for re-opening, but he’s hopeful it will be in mid-January.

“I just can’t say when. Everyone is working as fast as possible, and Bimini Bay Construction has been great in getting things done quickly and up to code,” Cochran said.

Welch said he inspects the renovations regularly and agreed with Cochran — a mid-January opening is possible.

The 30-member staff of the Rod & Reel Pier has been receiving assistance — some payments toward rent and utilities — from All Island Denominations, the coalition of island churches.

Additionally, the food pantry at Roser Memorial Community Church has been available to R&R pier employees.

Webcam of pier receives honor

Joe Zambito enjoys a great view of Tampa Bay and the Rod & Reel Pier from his home in Anna Maria.

In fact, he’s had a webcam focused on the Rod & Reel Pier, 875 N. Shore Drive, Anna Maria, since before the landmark pier and restaurant closed for repairs following a Sept. 30 electrical fire.

Zambito’s webcam has apparently captured international attention.

He said he’s been getting a lot of praise from local television stations, and some have carried his webcam photo of the pier during discussion of current weather conditions on Anna Maria Island.

Zambito said that earlier this month he was featured on ABC’s “Good Morning America” television show and weatherman Al Roker of NBC’s “Today” included a Zambito picture in one of his best sunrise segments.

Zambito said he’s also received an email from earthcam.com, the company that hosts his webcam, to inform him that his cam has been included in the 2013 Most Interesting Webcams.

Earthcam.com reported more than 200,000 visits to Zambito’s webcam as of Nov. 30.

Zambito said his webcam photo of a sunrise over the Rod & Reel Pier won the first-ever “Best Sunrise or Sunset” picture from earthcam’s worldwide network.

